

## Rear Adm. Donald K. Bullard

### Commander, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command

The Navy Expeditionary Combat Command (NECC) is a vital new element in the Navy's role in the global war on terror. The establishment of NECC in January brought the manning, training and equipping of Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD); Naval Coastal Warfare; Riverine; Combat Camera Atlantic; the Expeditionary Combat Readiness Center; Navy Expeditionary Logistics Support functions; the Maritime Civil Affairs Group and the Seabees under one umbrella. NECC integrates all warfighting requirements for expeditionary combat and combat support elements. This transformation allows for standardized training, manning and equipping of Sailors who will participate in maritime security operations as part of the joint force.

Rear Adm. Bullard has been the NECC commander since its establishment in January 2006. Just months away from the command's first anniversary, CHIPS asked the admiral to discuss NECC capabilities.



Rear Adm. Donald K. Bullard

*CHIPS: In May, the Navy reestablished its riverine forces which were last used during the Vietnam War, has the 40-year gap been difficult to overcome in terms of training and fusing forces?*

**Rear Adm. Bullard:** Our riverine forces are just one part of the NECC puzzle which includes the Navy's expeditionary forces. Having a commander overseeing the manning, training and equipping of all these forces is new but the majority of the capability has been here within the Navy COCOMS, or combatant commands, for a long time. We have had Seabees for a long time. Underwater demolition has been here for a long time. We have been doing expeditionary logistics from the sea base for a long time.

Riverine forces establish and maintain control of rivers and waterways. They provide a continuum of capability from the green water to the brown water areas. Riverine forces balance our efforts to combat sea-based terrorism and other illegal activities, such as transporting weapons of mass destruction, hijacking, piracy and human trafficking. While many may think that is new, it really is an expansion of our current naval coastal warfare capability.

In addition to riverine, the Maritime Civil Affairs Group is a new structure in our organization, but the Navy has been doing civil military operations around the world since we came into existence. We do port visits; we do community relations projects like Project Handclasp; we have done tsunami relief, and we have assisted in Bangladesh. Those are civil military operations.

In the civil affairs group, we will formally train people on how to do civil affairs because we have been doing it ad hoc until now. This is to make sure that we have people that are well-trained to plan and assist the naval component commanders to do civil affairs.

This is a new organization, but it is not a new Navy core capability that we are building. Another new organization within NECC is the Expeditionary Training Command because we recognize the need to focus on our partners' ability to help with maritime security operations. But the Navy has been training with foreign militaries around the world for many years. Many countries do not have a big navy, but they do have small navies. They have small boats, and they do have maritime security concerns in their territorial waters, in their ports and harbors.

The Expeditionary Training Command will deliver timely, focused and customized training to host nations. This supports

critical regional stability by helping improve the recipient nation's capabilities in exercising maritime sovereignty.

None of this is new, it is simply adapting to what the maritime environment looks like today. It is balancing the Navy's capability across the full spectrum to be able to make sure that the sea lines of communication in blue water are secure — and that the harbors, ports and littorals are secure. It's extending our reach, doing maritime security operations on inland waterways whether it is on the Euphrates in Iraq or elsewhere.

This is ensuring that the Navy has capability across the full spectrum over the blue water, the green water and the brown water, and that is what NECC is doing.

A lot of people focused just on riverine because it's the 'Gucci' thing. Even though it is important that we be able to operate in that environment, so we deny sanctuary, freedom of movement of terrorists, and interdict arms and human trafficking, piracy — all of those things — it is just part of the continuum that we are building. It does not stand alone — nor can it stand alone.

NECC is all about closing any gaps or seams that may exist. It is not to duplicate or take away from what another service might be doing. It is to be sure there is seamless transition from what the Marine Corps does to what we do.

As we see in riverine, we are supporting the Marine Corps with its mission coming up after the first of the year. There has been a lot of supposition that we were building the 'naval infantry' — the naval infantry is the U.S. Marine Corps. We are better organizing and improving our warfighting effectiveness in these core maritime expeditionary areas.

*CHIPS: You had to start from scratch as far as organizing the groups that are now under NECC. How did that come together?*

**Rear Adm. Bullard:** We have force commanders that are charged to man, train, equip, organize and resource. We have had those for a long time — for AIRFOR (air forces), SURFOR (surface forces) and SUBFOR (submarine forces) — they are called type commanders (TYCOMS).

About 18 months ago, we saw that we had other forces that did not have a coherent force commander, and they had been below the threshold until 9/11 — Seabees, EOD, and naval coastal warfare. They have been around for a long time and are now in high demand by a lot of the geographical naval component commanders.

In the past, they had some challenges, whether it was resources or training support. They did not have anyone with the oversight to help them get the visibility they needed. They needed to be properly organized to respond more effectively to the demand signal and request for forces by the naval component commanders or by the COCOMS, and they needed visibility in the budget.

We needed to establish, just like we did for AIRFOR, SURFOR and SUBFOR, a command that brings this all together, that better organizes them, capitalizes on the synergy in training and equipment, gives them visibility in the budget and can better package them in their mission for the naval component commanders — and provides a better command and control structure for them. They need a commander that can do all that.

About 18 months ago, the decision was made to stand up another type commander, and we went to CNO, the Chief of Naval Operations, with our proposal. Also about that time, the Navy recognized that it needed to expand and balance these capabilities and better organize them, and soon after that Navy decided it needed to expand into the inland waterways. Even though we had naval coastal warfare, we felt the need to expand that.

We need to better organize civil military operations and have teams of regional experts so that when we do tsunami relief, for example, we better connect to the combatant commander's theater security operational plan.

As the CNO expressed his vision of the 1,000-ship Navy, a global architecture of allies and coalition partners and friends that can act together globally to create maritime security — whether it be counterterrorism or piracy or human trafficking that also has an interactive full-time global force, the realization was that many countries do not have a large, traditional navy. They have small boats. We need to train to them, and that's how the idea for the Expeditionary Training Command came up.

We recognized that we needed a type commander for existing expeditionary forces. They all operate in about the same battlespace — near coast, near inland, inland waterway so it made sense to bring them under this commander also.

They were already organized as Seabees, EODs and naval coastal warfare forces. Riverine, Maritime Civil Affairs Group and the Expeditionary Training Command are in the same area too — in this maritime expeditionary environment. It made sense to bring them under NECC. There are lots of synergies in training and equipment that we can capitalize on.

Last October it was approved by the CNO to bring all of these capabilities under a new type commander, and January 13, 2006, we stood up. For 10 months we have been bringing this all together. Our focus is on properly organizing these forces, increasing the warfighting effectiveness for our naval component commanders, making sure they are properly equipped and trained, making sure they see the right resources and visibility in the budget and providing a more coherent command and control structure for the warfare commander of these forces. It has been a challenge.

*CHIPS: Is the intent to deploy with the strike group and the Marine Expeditionary Force? Or are your forces deployed on the request of the COCOMs and component commanders?*

**Rear Adm. Bullard:** NECC is not a warfare commander. We are



**Santa Rita, Guam (Dec. 15, 2006) –** Commander, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, Rear Adm. Donald K. Bullard, displays the Navy's first Expeditionary Warfare pin, awarded to Master-at-Arms 2nd Class Carl Hurtt, assigned to Mobile Security Squadron Seven (MSS-7), during a ceremony onboard U.S. Naval Base Guam. The Expeditionary pin, the Navy's first new warfare device issued in the last six years, is the latest in a series of milestones implemented by the Navy to acknowledge the service's need to have Sailors with core expeditionary capabilities. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 2nd Class Edward N. Vasquez.

a TYCOM. We are charged with manning, training, equipping, organizing and resourcing the Navy's expeditionary forces. We are a force provider. We get a mission request from one of the fleet commanders, and we make sure to build an adaptive force that meets that capability, and then we will deploy a force to that fleet commander.

In conjunction with our two training fleets, 2nd Fleet and 3rd Fleet — they are the ones that deploy the forces around the world — we are in charge of making sure these adaptive forces meet the mission capability. We are not a warfare commander; we are a type commander, or force provider.

*CHIPS: The forces that are under NECC, for example, the EOD capability that you have and the riverine forces, will they become a regular part of the strike group?*

**Rear Adm. Bullard:** Some of our forces are integrated into strike groups and expeditionary strike groups, like the EOD, but the Seabees are not. Seabees are deployed on a rotating basis around the world to the different naval component commanders — 6th Fleet, 5th Fleet and 7th Fleet.

EOD is also deployed to those fleet commanders and the naval component commanders as are the maritime security forces. Some maritime security forces are integrated.

Our objective here is to take the mission requirement — whether it be an integration into another force, with the Marines, Army or carrier strike groups or on their own — and assure that the deployed unit can meet its mission. As a force provider, our forces could be integrated into the joint force, into the Marine force, into other naval forces or they can act independently depending on the mission requirements.





Whidbey Island, Wash. (Dec. 12, 2006) – Commander, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, Rear Adm. Donald Bullard, speaks to members of Explosive Ordnance Disposal Mobile Unit Eleven during his visit to the unit. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist 1st Class Bruce McVicar.

Riverine is not a permanent part of the strike group, but riverine could operate in an environment where it reports to the strike group commander. We are not going to deploy a bunch of small boats in a strike group.

*CHIPS: Can you talk about the coastal warfare mission?*

**Rear Adm. Bullard:** Naval coastal warfare has been done for many years, but the current genesis came out of Vietnam. In Vietnam, naval coastal warfare went into riverine and when it came out of Vietnam, it was split into two areas: one was special boat teams that went to the SEALs, and naval coastal warfare, which was mainly all Reservists until recently. Their mission is coastal surveillance and maritime security operations.

Today, we do surveillance and small boat security operations in three or four different ports in U.S. Central Command. We provide high-visibility or high-value unit protection, procure needed small boats to protect them and provide force protection teams for transit of noncombatant vessels for the Maritime Sealift Command, for example.

We have security teams. Naval coastal warfare is about security in harbors and bays in the near shore to be able to do surveillance and interdiction and maritime security.

*CHIPS: Does maritime civil affairs fill a diplomatic role?*

**Rear Adm. Bullard:** We are not in charge of diplomatic engagement with countries. The State Department does that. We are there to support those objectives with certain civil military operations. Are we training diplomats? No. We are training individuals to be regionally focused, who are able to coordinate civil military operations into a coherent plan that connects into the naval component commander's engagement objectives. The COCOMS are connected with the State Department. We are down the chain quite a bit.

The purpose of Maritime Civil Affairs Group teams is to gain expertise and knowledge of how to work with the interagency

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– Rear Adm. Donald K. Bullard  
Commander, Navy Expeditionary Combat Command

process and how to work with the NGOs (nongovernmental organizations) in disaster situations. It is about the Navy having a trained set of individuals who can plug into the humanitarian disaster relief organizations.

As we saw with Katrina, the main thrust of the first responders came from the Navy. No one could get in there. We did an amazing job. We had quite a few of our forces down there. We want to have people professionally trained to be able to run civil military operations from the sea and better connect with the Federal Emergency Management Agency or the U.S. Agency for International Development if needed.

Do we support the State Department and the country teams diplomatically? Sure we do.

*CHIPS: I've read news reports about the enthusiasm of the brown water Sailors. Why do you think they have this level of enthusiasm?*

**Rear Adm. Bullard:** It is not just the brown water Sailors; everybody connects brown water Sailors with riverine because that is what everybody thinks it is. But there are other people doing brown water stuff. It is really about expeditionary Sailors. I have people doing customs and cargo handling in Kuwait, who are just as excited as the Sailors on those boats.

I have good Sailors, who are teaching Iraqis security procedures and how to guard oil platforms in the North Arabian Gulf, who are just as excited as the people on those boats. It is about expeditionary Sailors; it is about all of them.

Why are they excited? It is the small unit camaraderie in most cases. It is personal involvement when you talk about four people on a boat. They rely on each other. It is up close and personal with the environment. Even though our Navy mission out at sea is just as important, I would not trade one of my boats for an aircraft carrier. It is the full spectrum that we need.

The Sailors see that we, the Navy, need to be in this environment because this is a maritime environment. It's challenging both mentally and physically.

*CHIPS: Do expeditionary Sailors exploit technology or would you say that their work is more hands-on?*

**Rear Adm. Bullard:** That is part of NECC's charter, to see where we can bring in technology to improve warfighting effectiveness, to provide better force protection and to reduce the manpower load.

We have tactical unmanned air vehicles and unmanned surface vehicles. We are bringing in sensors and data technology to the boats. By having that technology, we can expand maritime domain awareness from near inland harbors and all the way out



China Lake, Calif. (Nov. 6, 2006) – Sailors from Naval Coastal Warfare Squadron Five and Explosive Ordnance Disposal (EOD) Group One shoot an M-16 at a target 25 yards away for a weapons qualification course during a joint task force exercise. U.S. Navy photo by Mass Communication Specialist Seaman Jose R. Rolun.

to the blue water with the carriers so you have an integrated picture.

Bringing technology into this area will allow us to have that common operating picture that spans the blue, green and brown water.

*CHIPS: Is there a group doing experimentation for NECC's mission areas?*

**Rear Adm. Bullard:** We are capitalizing on the normal Navy process as well as the joint process. The Office of Naval Research is looking into some things for us. We are capitalizing on some of the things that DARPA, the Defense Advanced Research Projects Agency, is doing for the other services. We are working with the Marine Corps Warfighting Laboratory.

Do we have a science and technology entity that specifically supports us? No, but I do have a technology strategy directorate that is leveraging all the other things that go on. We need to bring in today's technology.

We are leveraging off all the other efforts that are going on. It can be Army, Air Force or industry. When we talk about security, which is our main function here, there are a lot of things that are commercially available or that research is doing about security issues that can apply here.

*CHIPS: Can you talk about the gaps that you are filling for the Special Operating Forces and Marines.*

**Rear Adm. Bullard:** We are trying to see what our interdependencies are with the Marine Corps, the Special Forces and the Coast Guard. We are still doing that analysis. There are interdependencies.

There may be times where there is a maritime security mission that is just Navy. There may be a maritime security mission supporting the Marines on the ground, or there could be a maritime security mission where the Marines need to support us.

We are developing the concept of operations and trying to see where there are gaps. The Coast Guard owns many small boats. We are working to where we have the right commonality

and techniques, tactics and procedures. The Coast Guard has officers embedded in our naval coastal warfare, and they deploy with us. We have Coast Guard boats around the oil platforms and harbors working with us overseas.

We have lots of small boats too. Since the Coast Guard is in charge of homeland security, if need be, we're looking at how could we add to their capacity. We are looking at that interdependency.

Where can we support the Special Forces mission? We are helping Special Forces in a couple of places to do some of their security. We're asking, what do we need to do to build capability that better enhances their mission?

*CHIPS: Can you talk about what you would like NECC to look like in five years?*

**Rear Adm. Bullard:** In five years we want to see it as a mature TYCOM, such as AIRFOR and SURFOR. We want to have a mature structure that provides the best warfighter effectiveness of these forces and the best effectiveness and efficiency in responding to the mission requirements from the naval component commanders.

We want to ensure that we have the process that gives us the best command and control and force protection for our Sailors. We want to be an established pillar within the Navy. There is surface, there is sub-surface, there is air and there is medical, and we want expeditionary to be that pillar across the full spectrum of the supportable community in detailing, resources and equipment.

We have made leaps and bounds in the last year. All of the capabilities that we have talked about will be deployed in the next six months. Civil affairs and riverine will deploy sometime after the first of the year [2007]. It took 10 months from the word go to stand these up with fully trained Sailors and equipment.

All of these capabilities will be deployed and will be operating in the maritime environment whether it is in blue water or green or brown water. Will it be fully mature? No, but we will have initial operating capability. We will be maturing and building the processes and learning more about how we can get more effective warfighting out of these capabilities and how we can get better efficiency in providing and resourcing them.

In five years we will have an established force that has all the support and processes within the Navy to man, train, equip, organize and resource to support this expeditionary mission. I can see it today. By the end of next summer, we will really be able to see it because it will be there in a small portion.

The Navy is pushing for it and adapting to this new environment — understanding where they need to be, understanding what capabilities they need to have, understanding that these are Navy core competencies and going full speed ahead to make this happen. I think we are going to get there.

*For more information about the Navy Expeditionary Combat Command, go to <http://www.necc.navy.mil> or contact the NECC public affairs office at (757) 462-7400 ext. 137 or ext. 177.*

*To view Rear Adm. Bullard's biography, go to Navy NewsStand's Biographies page at <http://www.navy.mil/navydata/bios/navy-bio.asp?biolD=58>.*

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